

Moonilal calls on Shell to boost Manatee gas output

AMID the ongoing 'gas crisis' facing the country, Energy Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal says the Government will be working closely with Shell in the coming months to explore opportunities to increase the volumes of gas that the Manatee project can deliver to the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

'Given the gas crisis we inherited, in the coming months we will be working with Shell to see if there are opportunities to increase the volumes of gas Manatee can bring to the Trinidad and Tobago economy,' Moonilal stated.

In a release issued on Saturday, Moonilal said he was 'very pleased' with the progress Shell is making with the Manatee project.

'The most recent development is the arrival in the country of the MV Vox Amalia Hopper Dredger which will conduct trenching operations for a component of the Manatee pipeline. Related works are also ongoing to prepare infrastructure in Guayaguayare. Manatee is a project which has been in the making for several years spanning multiple administrations,' Moonilal stated. He stated that in 2003 a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the procedure for the unitisation of cross-border hydrocarbon reservoirs was successfully negotiated and executed by Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela.

'In 2007 a Framework Treaty on Unitisation of Hydrocarbon Reservoirs that extend across the delimitation line was signed and served as a template for the Unitisation Treaties for individual reservoirs.

In August 2010 and in February 2015, the Partnership Government led by Mrs Kamla Persad-Bissessar signed field specific treaties for Loran-Manatee and Manakin-Cocuina cross border fields respectively,' he stated.

'These two agreements meant that there was agreement, after technical study, as to the apportionment between both countries of the Original Gas in Place (OGIP). This was an important step towards the development of the Manatee project,' Moonilal stated.

Moonilal stated that, based on this understanding, the Manatee field was de-unitised from the larger cross-border Loran-Manatee field, allowing development to proceed under the production sharing contract between the Energy Ministry and Shell.

'The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries is very focused on working with Shell to ensure the safe delivery of the Manatee project and first gas by 2027. This is an important step to right siding the shortage of natural gas that we inherited in April 2025 and which has negatively impacted industrial output, government revenue and foreign exchange earnings,' Moonilal stated.

Last week former energy minister Stuart Young hailed the progress in Manatee.

'Thankfully Trinidad and Tobago continues to benefit from the visionary hard work that we did. The ability for us to produce the gas from Manatee was negotiated successfully by me with the government of Venezuela in Caracas in 2019. We then engaged in complex negotiations with Shell and executed a new PSC with Shell in 2021. In 2023 we were able to secure a contract for gas supply for NGC from Shell from the Manatee field,' Young stated.

'In July 2024 Shell announced FID for Manatee. This project is an investment of over US \$1 billion and secures our country's energy security as the largest investment in decades. Despite the challenges we persevered and got it done. I am pleased to see it progressing as envisaged. Hard work, competence, honesty and integrity produced real results every time,' he stated.